

KATOLICKI UNIWERSYTET LUBLIŃSKI

Wydział Filozoficzny

BEING OR GOOD ?

METAMORPHOSES OF NEOPLATONISM

Edited by
Agnieszka Kijewska

Wydawnictwo PUL

Reviews

Drac de hab. Nilsen (1955-1956)
De hel. Nilsen (1955-1956)

Technical and computer design

Adam Nicolson

Color design

Byron and Pabich

© Copyright by Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2004

Wydawnictwo polski dofinansowanie przez
Komitetu Badani Naukowych

The publication was subsidized by
the Institute of Scientific Research

ISBN 83-7363-219-8

Wydawnictwo KUL
ul. Złota 1, 20-031 Lublin
tel. (81) 7363-219, fax (81) 7363-20
e-mail: wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl

Drac de hab.

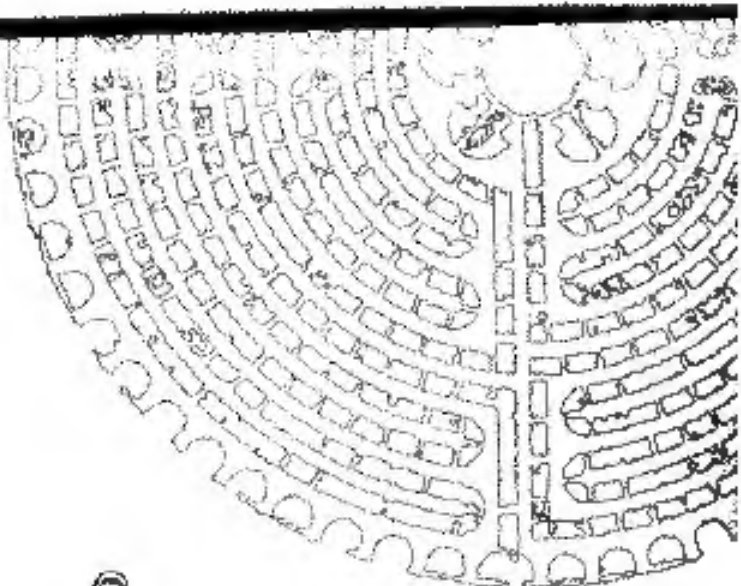
Adam Nicolson

ul. Złota 1

ul. Złota 1, 20-031 Lublin

tel. (81) 7363-219, fax (81) 7363-20

e-mail: wydawnictwo@kul.lublin.pl



CONTENTS

Challenges	9
Introduction	15

I. THE ORIGIN OF NEOPLATONISM: ELYSIUM AND ORTUS

Walter Burkert, <i>Der griechische Begriff der Elysien und Elysion</i>	25
John F. Finamore, <i>Proclus on Plato's Theory of the Soul and the Soul</i>	33
Walter Burkert, <i>The Concept of Elysium in the Thought of Plato</i>	65
Marina D'Amico, <i>Good and Evil in Plato's "On the Good and the Evil"</i>	75
Anna D'Amico, <i>The Doctrine of Categories in Neoplatonism</i>	83

II. PROCLUS' THOUGHT

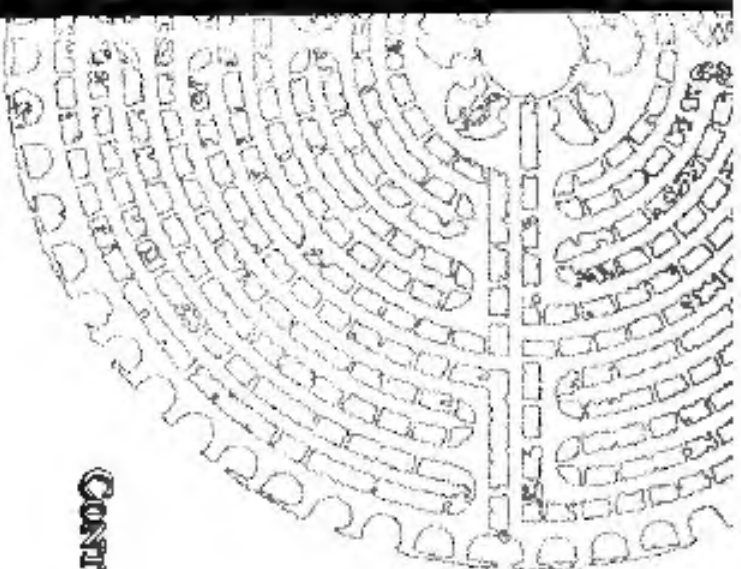
Walter Burkert, <i>Proclus' Begriff der Elysien und der Elysion</i>	97
John F. Finamore, <i>Proclus on Plato's Theory of the Soul and the Soul</i>	121
Walter Burkert, <i>The Concept of Elysium in the Thought of Plato</i>	139

III. NEOPLATONISM AND THE FUTURE OF THE ORTUS

Walter Burkert, <i>Proclus' Begriff der Elysien und der Elysion</i>	151
John F. Finamore, <i>Proclus on Plato's Theory of the Soul and the Soul</i>	169
Walter Burkert, <i>The Concept of Elysium in the Thought of Plato</i>	183
Anna D'Amico, <i>The Doctrine of Categories in Neoplatonism</i>	199
Marina D'Amico, <i>Good and Evil in Plato's "On the Good and the Evil"</i>	211
Walter Burkert, <i>Proclus' Begriff der Elysien und der Elysion</i>	229
John F. Finamore, <i>Proclus on Plato's Theory of the Soul and the Soul</i>	251
Walter Burkert, <i>The Concept of Elysium in the Thought of Plato</i>	261

IV. THE HERITAGE OF NEOLITHISM IN THE MEXICAN AREA
AND THE RENAISSANCE

Agustín de Kijewski, <i>Beethoven's Conception of the 5th symphony</i>	307
Centenario de la Independencia, <i>The Legend of Diego de la Hazaña</i> by Manuel Soto, Trujillo and Sr. Constanza Pacheco, Cochabamba	319
Travellers of the Middle Ages	319
David L. Kinsman, <i>Symbols and their Interpretation: John the Star</i> and <i>Flight of Saint Victor on the Christian History, chapter 2</i>	343
Manuel Jarama, <i>The World as a Zócalo in Mexico, Aguascalientes</i>	355
Gabriela Kurylowicz, <i>History and the World according to</i> <i>Gregory of Rimini, Rimini</i>	365



CONTRIBUTORS

Constantinos ATHANASSOPOULOS, Ph. D., working on a part-time basis at the Department of Philosophy, University of Glasgow.

Wolfgang BEIERWALTES is professor emeritus of philosophy at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. His main publications include: *Probleme Grundriss einer Metaphysik*, Frankfurt 1963; *Platon*, (New English and Zol's Platon III 7), Übersetzt, eingeleitet und kommentiert, Frankfurt 1967; *Metaphysik und Theologie*, Frankfurt 1972; *Identität und Differenz*, Frankfurt 1980; *Deutung der Ethik*, Studien zum Neoplatonismus und deren Wirkungsgeschichte, Frankfurt 1985; *Substanzentwurf und Entstehung der Ethik*, Platon Enneade V 3, Teil, Übersetzung, Anmerkungen, Erläuterungen, Frankfurt 1991; *Erwagungen Grundriss einer Darstellung*, Frankfurt 1994; *Platonismus am Ausgang*, Frankfurt 2001; *Der andere Selbst*, Studien zur Platon Begriff der Güter und der Eros, Frankfurt 2001.

Dominique BERTIAND, S. J. is former director of the *Institut des Sciences Catholiques*. He is the author of *Un Corps pour l'Esprit*, *Essai sur l'espérance chrétienne selon les Constitutions de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 1974; *La Religion d'Augustin de Lepida*, *Études de Philosophie*, 1985; and editor of *Bernard de Clairvaux*, *Liberté, amour, spiritualité*, 1992; *Les Pères de l'Église au XX^e siècle*, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Théologie et Spiritualité des Sciences Catholiques*, 1997; *Praxis de Benoît et Philippe au IV^e siècle*, 2004.

Yvonne de ANDIA worked at C.N.R.C. She is preparing the French translation of *Deus Noster et Mystica Theologia* of Pseudo-Dionysius. Among her many publications: the most concerning neo-Humanism: *transposition et détermination de l'homme selon l'œuvre de J. G. de la Paro*, Paris 1986; *Historie l'œuvre à Dieu selon Dostoïevski*, Louvain 1990. She was the editor of *Deux Théologies et la question de la sainteté*, *Actes du colloque international* Paris 1994, Paris 1997.

Dragan DEMBINSKI is professor and chair of the Department of History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy at the Serbian University (Kragujevac). He is an expert on Plato's philosophy. His books include: *Zagadivanje idejnosti u ontologiji fundamentalističkom Platonu* [The Problem of Essence in Plato's Fundamental Ontology], Kragujevac 1990; *Vreme i delo*, *Estetika i filozofija* [Theory of Time, The Foundation of Plato's Thought], Kragujevac 1997; *Platon i njegova filozofija* [Plato's Time and Thought], Kragujevac 2003.

Gracelena BEYDAMS-SCHILL is associate professor in the Program of Liberal Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Her books include *Deming and Providence: Fate and Providential Knowledge of Place* ("Temer" (1999); *The Patient Sister Self: Religiosity and Affinity*, Chicago University Press, forthcoming.

Wojciech SZCZĘCIBABA, graduate of Christian Theological Academy (Warsaw), at present he works as an academic dean at Theological Seminary in Wrocław. He is the author of: *Kontekst misyjnego powołania w życiu teologicznym* [The Context of Eternal Mission in Early Christian "Mission", Wrocław 2001].

Agata UZDAWIŃCZAK is professor of Kantian Metaphysics. His chief areas of interest are Pythagorean cosmology and Platonic philosophy. He is the author of: *The Golden Chain. An Analysis of Pythagorean and Platonic Philosophy*, Bloomington 2004.

Norbert WIDOK is professor at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Opole. He published: *Stwierdzenia teologiczne w myśli i poezji Karola Aktona* [Theological Statements in Poetry and Prose of Carolo Aktona] (Opole 1992); *"Prośbom dusznych serwus"*; *Studia teologiczne* [Studies in Theology], (ed.), Opole 1993; *"Oratio antiqua"*; *Studia filologiczne i teologiczne* [Philological and Theological Studies], (ed.), Opole 1998; *"Psalms" w pieśniach Gregoria z Neorgowa*; *Sanktuarium: do obywatelskości* [Psalms in Gregory of Neorgowa's Works, A Study in Roman Theology], (Opole 2001).

Aneta ZHIBKOVA, graduate of the Catholic University of Lublin, at present she is a researcher at the Department of Philosophy of the University of Tel. Aviv.

Agnieszka Kijewska

Introduction

Constantinos Athanasopoulos

*The Influence Of Dionysius The Areopagite
On Ioannes Scotus Eriugena
And St. Gregorios Palamas:
Goodness As Transcendence Of Metaphysics*

Abstract



he paper investigates the Platonist and Neoplatonist project of uniting metaphysics and ethics. This project is encapsulated in the position „all that the God has made are good" and is based (for the Christian side) on *Genesis* 2: 31 "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." This position is expressed in both Byzantine and medieval philosophy and in particular in the relevant theories of (Pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite, Ioannes Scotus Eriugena and St. Gregorios Palamas. The paper shall elaborate on the theory of Ps. Dionysios, and shall put forward the claim that Ioannes Scotus Eriugena's interpretation of it in medieval philosophy led to serious problems in both medieval ethics and medieval political philosophy. It will also prove that the interpretation of St. Gregorios Palamas on key passages from the Dionysian corpus are more close to the Dionysian positions and general theory and can escape the problems that Ioannes Scotus' interpretation presented. It will close the discussion with an investigation into some of the philosophically important ramifications for Palamas' theory of the Divine Energies.

Introduction

It is a common ground in Platonist, Neoplatonist and Christian mysticism that creation is good¹. The determination of creation as good however, forces the mystic to apply his life into two directions: a) to know its goodness, and b) to make his life (and his created self) abide by this goodness. This lifelong project is neither easy to envisage nor without perils. It is not easy to envisage because the position "all that the God has made are good" (καλλίστα or κτθε bests for Plato and "very good" "καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν" according to the Hebrew and Greek-Christian-version)² may mean that only God can see the goodness of creation. Man may be impotent to comprehend the goodness of the world around and

¹ See Plato's *Timaeus*, 30a6-7: αὐτὸς δ' οὐτ' ἐν οὐτ' ἄρα τῇ θεῷ τῷ θεῷ ἀλλὰ αὐτῷ τῷ καλλίστῳ; see also, *ibid.*, 29d7-30e1, 92e4-9; Plotinus usually goes further: the One is in all things and all things are in the One αὐτῷ αὐτῷ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ πᾶν αὐτῷ, see Enneads, V, 4, 2, 16-17 and *ibid.*, V, 8, 8, 1-23. For the Christian position see *Genesis*, 2:31.

within, and thus lead himself into destruction. On the other hand, even if he can see the goodness of creation, this does not mean that he can make his life follow this goodness or accommodate itself in it. Thus, Platonist, Neoplatonist and Christian philosophers (who by the definition of their adjective "philosophers" must follow wisdom and thus truth, as "lovers of wisdom" - wisdom or "sophia" has both moral and epistemological connotations) can be divided into three basic categories: a) those who limit themselves to metaphysics as a guide to morals (and, since they can never be certain about their metaphysics, their ethics is of limited validity and importance), b) those who see morals as a guide to metaphysics (and, since their ethics is always posited on behaviouristic terms, their ethics is always unstable, transitory, relative and subjective and thus not a good canon for one's life, i.e., not an "ethics" in the proper -common- sense of the term), and c) those who comprehend metaphysics with its limitations (looking for a foundational help in theology) and seek the help of the divine in their attempt to make their life abide by their illuminations in metaphysics (because they know that with their own powers it is impossible to achieve such a task). It is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to place in a category a mystic philosopher. Mysticism is based on inspiration, illumination, an ecstatic union, and a rapture with the divine² (or the Christian God), and, as such, a rationalistic categorization or characterization of the mystical philosophers presented here seems a feeble attempt at best. What will be attempted here is an investigation into the Platonist, Neoplatonist and Christian project of the union of metaphysics and ethics, and more particularly the over-riding importance of ethics over metaphysics in such mystical writings.

1. The Platonic Union of Metaphysics and Ethics.

Plato's theories about the Good and about the Creator-God are characteristic of the Hellenic tendency of maximising the importance of ethics in comprehending and understanding metaphysics, and in achieving a positive result in our continuous struggle to unite with our Creator and God. Embedded in such theories is the belief that God is Good, Wise and Beautiful and that one can come close to Him, only after following faithfully a *moral modus vivendi*, a way of

² See footnote 1 above.

³ For Plotinus' views on the ecstatic Eros of the soul, see *Enneads*, VI, 9, 9, 24-27; IV, 4, 2, 23-32; VI, 7, 36, 10-14; VI, 7, 33, 33-34; VI, 7, 37, 17-18.

life which embodies the chief elements of Hellenic aretology and more importantly the careful combination of *phronesis* and wisdom, that are characteristic of modern Greek ethics. The following passages show this quite clearly

Passage I

ΠΛΑΤΩΝ, ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ, 246cd-246d

αἰθέναται δὲ οὐδ' ἐξ ἐνὸς λόγου λελογισμένον. ἀλλὰ πλαττωμένη εἴτε
βέλτερος εἴτε ἰσχυρῶς νοησάντες θεῶν

ἰσχυρόν τι [the soul] is proved not by a correctly and well thought out argument, but we humans think about our god as something immortal, without having sight of him and without comprehending him in his essence.

Passage II

ΠΛΑΤΩΝ, ΦΑΙΔΡΟΣ, 246d-246e4

νεκρονομήσει δὲ τῇ μέλει τοῦ περὶ το σῶμα τοῦ θεοῦ [ψυχῆ], τὸ θε
οῦ καλόν, σοφόν, ἀγαθόν, καὶ πᾶν ἐν τούτῳ τούτῳ τῷ τρέφεται τε
καὶ αἰσθάνεται μέλει τῇ τῇ ψυχῇ πύρριμα, ἀσχηρὸν δὲ καὶ κακὸν καὶ
τοῖς διανοήσας φέρονται τε καὶ διόλλυται.

[The soul, in participating in the divine nature far more than the bodily parts and powers. The divine, in addition to all other qualities, is beautiful, wise, good and all of the same kind. So with those qualities the wings of the soul are nourished and grow, but with the vile and the bad and all the contrary (to the good, wise and beautiful) they (the wings of the soul) are perished and destroyed.

Passage III

ΠΛΑΤΩΝ, ΑΥΓΕΛ 214d3-e1

Τοῦτο ποῖον εἰνέπεται, ὡς ἔμοι δοκεῖσιν. εἰ ἔτι μᾶλλον, οἱ τὸ θεοῦ τῷ
αἰσθάνει φίλοι λέγοντες, οὗς ὁ ἀγαθὸς τῷ ἀγαθῷ μένος μόνον φίλος. ὁ δὲ
κακὸς εἴτε ἀγαθῷ εἴτε κακῷ ἐνδέχεται εἰς ἀληθείᾳ φίλον ἔχειν. σκληραίνει
οὖν

κατένευσεν.

*Ἐρχομαι ἔτι εἴτις εἴτις οἱ φίλοι· ὁ γὰρ λόγος ἡμῖν σημαίνει ὅτι οἱ οὖν
ἀγαθοί.

Πάντα γε, εἴφη, δοκεῖ.

Socrates: This is what is suggested, as I think, most beloved, those who claim that the like person loves the like, because, for example, the

good alone: a good to the good, but the bad is never related neither to the bad nor to the good with any relation of true friendship. Do you agree?

Lysis: Yes.

Socrates: Thus, we know now who are the friends. Because our argument states that friends are only those who are good.

Lysis: Yes, indeed.

In these passages we have the core of the Platonic doctrine in the relation of ethics and metaphysics: a passage (I) we see the platonic belief that God cannot be absolutely and totally known in human terms, in passage (II) we see the idea that a human cannot come close to God unless he becomes good and wise and in passage (III) we see why this is so: only the good are friends, and if man wants to be friends with the divine, he must be like the divine in his goodness. Here we see in the 'core doctrine' the three elements which we are going to discuss in more detail later on, in our discussion of the Christian and mystical theories of Pn. Dionysius, Thomas Scotus Erigena and St. Gregorius Palamas: a) that we cannot have a clear and certain theory in metaphysics, if we do not invoke or come close to the Divine, b) the only way to come close or invoke the help of the Divine is through the attainment (or at least the effort to attain) goodness and wisdom and c) and this is so because we must be like the Divine in goodness in order to approach it (based on the principle of 'the same attracts the same'). Notice that in all three elements of the core doctrine we see the superiority of Good (ethics), versus Being (or metaphysics). In order to know Being one must first become Good. We become Good, then we attract the Divine and in this way we know Being with the help of the Divine, which is absolutely unknowable in human terms.⁴

Of course, here, I do not claim that Plato puts forward the idea of a God in the Christian or the Jewish sense. I only emphasise and consider in its full ramifications the idea that a man in order to approach God, who is a Being absolutely good and wise, must be himself good and wise. Many Neoplatonists, chiefly among them Plotinus later on supported this idea.⁵ It is important to note from

⁴ Here I differ significantly from the interpretation R. J. C. Conell gives to platonic Ethics. See R. J. C. Conell, *Being and Ethics in Plato's Moral Cosmos*, in H. J. Blumenthal and R. A. Marcus, eds., *Neoplatonism and Early Christian Thought: Essays in honour of A. H. Armstrong*, London, Variorum Publications, Ltd. 1981, pp. 3-19.

⁵ See *Enneads*, I, 3 and 4 and 6 and 8; III, 2; V, 3 and 4; VI, 7; and mainly in VI, 9, 3.

the *start* that this idea of uniting the ethical and the metaphysical endeavours⁶ is of paramount importance in both the ancient world, but also in the world which immediately follows: that of the medieval and Byzantine times.

II. Ps. Dionysios the Areopagite: Goodness as Transcendence of Metaphysics.

In the famous throughout the medieval and the Byzantine period mystical, theological, and philosophical writings of the anonymous monk, who used the name of the first bishop of Athens and student of St. Paul, Dionysius the Areopagite,⁷ we see an idea that brought forward an important change in the Platonic and Neoplatonic union of ethics and metaphysics. There the anonymous writer starting his treatise on the Mystical Theology offers a quite peculiar (for the Platonic and Neoplatonic standards) prayer:

Passage IV

Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Mystical Theology*.

Τριάς υπερούσιε και υπέρθεε, και υπεράγαθε, της Χριστιανων έφεσι θεολογίας, (δίδων ημεις επί την των μυστικών λόγων υπερέργωσιν, και υπερέρη και υπερτέτην κορυφήν, ένθα πρ απλή, και απόλυτη, και άπειρη της θεολογίας μυστήρια, κατά του πλήρωτος εγκαινιάσματος της κρυφισμύτου οίγης γνώσιν, εν τω σχετινωτάτω το υπερμενέστατον υπέρβλεποντα, και εν τω πέμπτον έννοει και πορίτω των υπερέχων αγάδων υπερέλθουσιν τοις ανωμάτους νόεσι.

Holy Trinity, who are above all essence and above all divinity and goodness, thou oversee the knowledge (wisdom) of the Christians for the God, lead us to the summit of the mystical words, which supersedes all knowledge and light. There, the simple and the absolute and the unchangeable mysteries of theology are covered by the beyond all light obscure mist of the mystically taught silence, which, within the absolute darkness, supercedes the brightness of the supreme light, and which, within the absolutely un-

⁶ have to emphasize here that, in both the Platonic and the Aristotelian sense *Metaphysics* - as we understand and use the word - can only be the study of *being qua being*, see Plato's *Republic*, 504b3-534d1, *Timaeus*, 27d5-28b and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 1003a2: 1003a32. Among others on this issue see the Orthodox view in Vladimir Lossky, *Theologie Mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*, Paris 1944. In English: Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, transl. Fellowship of St. Albans and St. Sergius, Cambridge 1957, 99f. (1957).

unchangeable and variable, makes the cyclical world overflow with the beyond at each new beginning.

The important change here lies in the use of the adjectives *unbegotten*, *unborn* and *eternally-born*, when one refers to the God. Even though the divine, the Daimonion or God, for the ancient Greek and mainly Platonic and Neoplatonic theology and philosophy has an essence, i.e., he is Good and Beautiful, in Dionysius He is beyond all essence, beyond all divinity, beyond all goodness and also beyond all beauty *unbegotten eternally*, or beyond all beauty brightness). Of course the change must be attributed among other things to the fact that Plato and the Neoplatonist God is not a personal God, and the Holy Trinity is the union of three persons. The dynamics of the union of these three persons is so incomprehensible in human terms that the one who is not shown the mystical way (*epagoge*) cannot escape the metaphysical, ontological and epistemological commitments to this world and cannot comprehend the Being which lies beyond all measure and being (*ibid.* par.2). The mystical way to this comprehension of the infinite God comes only after the absolute cleansing from all metaphysical, ontological and epistemological commitments to this world (see passage 5 below). According to Lossky it is exactly here that lies the main difference between the concept of *theosis* (or *ekstasis*) in the Dionysian corpus and the relevant idea of the Neoplatonists (chiefly among them Plotinus). According to Lossky the concept of *theosis* in the Dionysian corpus is the very transcendence of being as we know it (as one from the realm of Being), while for Plotinus it is the subordination of Being into the absolute simplicity of the One (for this reason Plotinus uses the concept of *ekstasis* or *transposition*). And while for Plotinus the One and one who rises to union with it absolute simplicity are one (or united metaphysically) and the soul can by its own power know the One (in its nature) if it lets itself be absorbed into its absolute simplicity, for the Dionysian corpus man is really different from the One Transcend God (there is a metaphysical and ontological gap between the two) and God is absolutely and in His nature unknowable, even in this: that He can be described as One (following here the Psalm *celo celorum unigenitus* in He placed darkness to hide Himself).⁵ This difference between the Dionysian position from the traditional Platonic and Neoplatonist positions is

⁵ See Lossky, *op. cit.* (Engl. trans.), pp. 29-3. See also P. 97, 2: *Neplly net qetyle alba nlyky avay at thak and darkness are raised about him, and 97-9 explains ungenyelyng, unly nlyky, kooq or the all needed for these all gods.*

shown more clearly and becomes more epistemologically important in the next passage (passage 5):

Passage V

Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Mystical Theology*, 1 III

...και τότε και αυτών απολύττειται των οραμένων και των οραντων, και εις τον γνόφον της αγνοίας εισδύκει τον έντως μυστικόν, καθ' όν απομαυνίσκας της γνωστότητος αντιλήψεις, και έν τω πέμπτω κενερεί και σκορπών γίνεται, και, έν του πάντων απόστασι, και ουθενός ούτε αυτού ούτε άλλου, τω παντελώς δε σπρόσσει της πέσης γνώσεως ανανεργησία, κατέ το κρείττον σκούμενος, και τω μηδέν γνώσκων, υπέρ των γνώσκων.

[...] and then he (Moses) dissociates himself from all those which are seen and all those who see, and he enters the total mystical and obscure most of the unknowable. There, by voiding all epistemological functions he enters the totally untouched and invisible, because he surrenders completely to the One who lies beyond all things and he (Moses) is of no one, not even of himself nor of anyone else. And with the ceasing of the epistemological function he is united spiritually with the totally unknown and he knows Him above all mental function by knowing nothing.

This total and absolute epistemological and metaphysical blindness, the metaphysical, epistemological, but not impersonal losing of one's self is both totally alien to ancient Greek metaphysics and epistemology and characteristic of Dionysius' theology and philosophy. After acknowledging the fact that he has discussed in other works the value of cataphatic ("affirmative") and "apophatic" ("negative") theology, *καταφατικῆς* and *αποφατικῆς* *θεολογίας*), he ends the small treatise with the title *On Mystical Theology*, with a series of aphorisms on what the triune God is not. There he claims that God is neither *what* nor *number* nor anything that a man can think of or imagine in an affirmative or negative way, because God is absolutely irrelevant to all that is human.

Passage VI

Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On Mystical Theology*, 5. I.

...επει και υπέρ πάντων θέσιν εστίν η πανταλῆς και πιαίας των πάντων αιτία, και υπέρ πάντων αιτιασέων η υπερχογή του πάντων απλώς αποκαλούμενου και επέκτατα των όλων.

Because the all perfect and primary cause of everything is above all affirmations, and above all abstractions is the superiority of this which is totally irrelevant to all and above all.

Intrinsically related to the above theology and philosophy is the idea that the evil can never be something positive, but it is something which is parasitic on the good, a privation or lessening of the good. In the treatise *On the Names of God*, we see a remarkable account on how the good causes and sustains good and the evil is nothing else but a privation of good.

Passage VII

Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Names of God*, 4, XXX.

...το ἀγαθὸν ἐκ τῆς μιᾶς καὶ τῆς ὅλης αἰτίας. Το δὲ κακὸν ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ μεγάλων ἐλλείψεων.

The good comes forth from one and the whole cause. But the evil, from many and particular privations (or deficiencies).

...Πάν το κατὰ φύσιν ἐξ αἰτίας ὁρισμένης γένηται. Εἰ δὲ το κακὸν ἀκαί-
των καὶ ἀόριστον, οὐ κατὰ φύσιν. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐν τῇ φύσει το πρὸς φύσιν,
οὐδὲ ἀσχετὸς ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ ὁ ἀόριστος.

Every natural phenomenon is borne from a definite cause. If the evil has no cause and is indefinite, then it is not natural. Because that which is unnatural does not lie in nature nor does the cause of bad craftsmanship lie in craftsmanship itself.

Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Names of God*, 4, XXXIV.

Οὐκ ἔστι οὐ το κακὸν, οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς οὐκ το κακὸν, Οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ το κακὸν ἢ κακὸν. Καὶ το γένεσθαι το κακὸν οὐ κατὰ δύναμιν ἀλλὰ δι' ἀσθένειαν.

Thus, the evil does not exist, neither belongs to those that exist. Since there is nowhere the evil as evil. And the becoming of evil comes about not due to a power, but due to an infirmity.

This idea of the evil, quite Platonic in its inspiration,⁴ is a direct consequence of the dynamism of the existence of the true God: the enlightened

⁴ See notably Plato, *Timaeus*, 86d7-86e3: ἀσθενὲς μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐδὲν, οὐκ δὲ κακὸν οὐδὲ τιμὴ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀκαίθετον τροφήν δὲ κακὴς γίγνεται μήνη, παρὲν δὲ ταῦτα εἶδος καὶ κακὸν τι ποσότησιν. Of course, we must not forget that the opposite view (that of the ethical Manichaeism) also claims Plato as its father. But I shall not enlarge here on which claim of fatherhood I consider legitimate.

can only see evil as evil (i.e., as something quite alien to the will and creation of God) and never as a privation of the infinite love of the triune God towards His three persons and towards the Creation, which, by its created nature, is good. Thus, the mystic (combining the apophatic and cataphatic philosophy and theology) can approach God through the knowledge of evil.

Contrary to this perspective, the created (fallen and unenlightened man), in addition to all the other ways with which he is unable to know God, he is also not able to know God through evil.¹⁶ In the non-mystical conception and morphology of evil, evil is something that exists independently from – and in an antagonistic relation to – the Good. It exists as an absolute and independent form of being, and ethics thus becomes both an ontology of the Good and an ontology of the evil, leading the non-mystic into some form of an ethical Manichaeism.

In opposition to such a dualistic conception of ethics as related to the meta-physics of the evil, Pa. Dionysius the Areopagite proposes an ethical ontology only for the Good and considers evil as parasitic on and a deficiency of the Good. It does not only need Good to come about as its necessary condition, but it also needs man's volition to bring forth both the necessary and the sufficient conditions for its occurrence in the Cosmos. Evil thus is quite foreign to the world of Creation. In such a world, all nature is good and evil is something quite alien to it and unusual. In this conception of the Good we see the thesis that Goodness is a transcendence of metaphysics. The Good, as both created by God and characterizing God, is incomprehensible and totally alien to the normal categories and objects of metaphysical study. We can have and do the absolute Good in our lives only through the mystical and ecstatic *Eros*¹ towards our God, and only through this ecstatic *Eros* that absolute Good becomes approachable and familiar to us. But, notice that in such an *Eros* there is no place for reason or comprehension, as we know it. Actually the very essence of this *Eros* is for the one who has it to exit himself and become the one who is the center of one's attention and one's being.¹² And if someone desires the evil and makes a mistake in what he should

¹ See P. Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* 4, XX.

There are affinities here between platonic and Dionysian cosmic Eros (see O'Connell, 1991). But, however, there are and important differences; in the Dionysian corpus the Eros is towards a personal being with absolute freedom of will, while for the platonic only for the cosmological models of the Demiurge.

12 See P. Duns Scotus, *On Divine Names*, 4, XIII: "Nunc de his tractandum est quod licet omnia esse debent aliter secundum rationem, aliter tamen secundum rationem. Quia dicitur quod in corpore, licet sit aliter esse, non aliter tamen in se habet ad seipsum, sed in se habet ad seipsum in se habet ad seipsum." [...]

direct his attention to, this is no desire but a failure of desire. For we have the power or possibility to achieve the Good once we let ourselves be surrendered to this Eros and love for the Good.¹³ In this way, the failure to do good is no simple cognitive issue and can never be reduced to intellectualistic terms.¹⁴

Metaphysics in human terms and the non-mystical mode of thought cannot approach nor comprehend the Good (since it cannot comprehend nor approach the exemplary absolute Good, which is found in God). It is trapped in the schema of understanding the world as the metaphysics of Good vs. the metaphysics of evil, the ethical and metaphysical Manichaeism (of which I spoke above) and cannot move into the mystical comprehension of absolute (created and uncreated) Good without the evil. It can only describe the created world after the fall of Adam, and, in particular, the created world, when it is in the power of men who desire and make evil thoughts and deeds (keeping evil existent in the created world). The way of the mystic however, is an ecstatic transcendence of such a metaphysics. It surpasses metaphysics and moves into the always true ontology of God, where there is no mode nor content of thought or human terms, and where there is nothing possible, all are actual and continuously energetic, since all are certain, existent and present.

Having this idea of Goodness as transcendence of metaphysics into mind, it is interesting now to see whether Ioannes Scotus Eriugena, the first perhaps who translated the mystical writings of P^l Dionysius the Areopagite into Latin, is indeed following this idea or distances himself from it.

III. Ioannes Scotus Eriugena: *The Division of Nature.*

In Ioannes Scotus Eriugena's famous work *De Divisione Naturae* we see a significantly different picture of the world. In Ioannes' system, nature is divided

«Καὶ ὅτι τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν ὅλην τὴν ἀσθένειαν, καὶ τὴν ἰσχυρίαν, καὶ τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ ἀποθέρεσιν, καὶ διὰ τὰ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ καὶ γένεσιν» (the good and the beautiful belong totally to the beautiful and the good, pre-existent in the beautiful and the good, and exist and create because of the beautiful and the good).

¹³ See *ibid.*, 4, XXXIV and XXXV.

¹⁴ In my interpretation of the Dionysian corpus here, I differ significantly from the interpretation Copleston gives in F. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* Book I, Vol. II, N.Y. Image, Doubleday 1965 (1950), p. 400, and from the quite unsympathetic to Dionysian ethics account of L-P. Sheldon-Williams in A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, p. 459.

in four parts: a) *Natura quoniam creator et non creatus*; b) *Natura quoniam creator et creatus*; c) *Natura quoniam creator et non creatus*; d) *Natura quoniam non creatus nec creator*. In such a schema, the first and the fourth divisions are God, as the one who creates and is uncreated, and as the final goal and purpose of all creation, the uncreated and uncreating and thus untranslatable. In the second division we have the principles of creation, the *officia, apparatus, apparatuses* (sic: *prototypes or preordinations*). In the third we have all creation that remains.¹⁵

In relation to Irenaeus' system we have to make the observation that God exists in the two of the four divisions of Nature, i.e., He is Nature at least in the two modes or divisions of Nature that we mentioned above. And even if in his Book 2 he makes the assertion that God and creation are distinct, he does make the point that they make together a totality or continuity. This of course solves the problem of a unitary metaphysics (for both the created and the uncreated), which we saw in St. Dionysius the Areopagite's system (and its inherent radical metaphysical and ontological distinction between on the one hand the created world, as it is after the fall of Adam, and on the other hand the uncreated and the created, as it existed before the fall of Adam), but is it itself without problems? See for this the following passage:

Passage VIII

Ioannes Scotus Erigena, *De Divisione Naturae*, III

We ought not to understand God and the creature as two things distinct from one another, but as one and the same. For the creature is subsisting in God; and God, manifesting Himself, in a marvellous and ineffable manner is created in the creature, the invisible making Himself visible and the incomprehensible comprehensible and the hidden revealed... and the simple composite... and the infinite finite and the uncircumscribed circumscribed... and creating all things He is created in all things and making all things is made in all things... and He comprehends all things in all things.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ioannis Scoti Erigenae, *De Divisione Naturae*, Book 1. I consulted the translation of C. Schwan, found in A. HYMAN and J. WALSH, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. Indianapolis/Cambridge 1973, p. 35. See for a detailed analysis of this division Stephen Gersh's article *John Scotus Erigena and the School of Chartres*, in: J. Marenbon, ed., *Medieval Philosophy*, London 1998, esp. pp. 120-132.

¹⁶ As cited by H. D. Pei in *Metaphysics and Christianity in Medieval Cosmology and Erigena*, in: B. McGinn and W. Otten, eds., *Erigena: East and West* (University of Notre Dame Press) 1994, p. 262.

In relation to the above, the obvious question in such a system is what evil is. Peculiarly enough however, Ioannes accepts here the Areopagite position that evil is a privation.¹⁷ Now, this acceptance would be of no major importance for any other system, but in the one that Ioannes puts forward it results into a serious problem of consistency. This is so because of the notorious position in the beginning of the *De Divinis Nominibus* that "nature is the general name . . . of all things which are and which are not."¹⁸ Now, if this position (which for Ioannes is the metaphysical foundation for his system) is to be taken into full account, then evil is Nature also. And the situation is more troublesome for Ioannes, if one considers his (also notorious) five basic distinctions between being and non-being (or between what can be characterized as being and what can be characterized as non-being in Nature).¹⁹ In these distinctions and especially the fifth mode of (or distinction between) being and non-being, man, as he exists after the original sin, is characterized as non-being, and Ioannes claims that man returns to (perfect) being (in the mode that he had it while in Paradise) with the help of the grace of Jesus Christ.²⁰ But even in this return and appeal to grace there is an emphasis on the rational investigation of the material universe and the metaphysics of nature.²¹

If we take all these into account, then evil for Ioannes is a non-being *per privationem* (since God is a non-being *per excellentiam*).²² And this non-being is part of Nature, i.e., something that can be thought, as good is also part of Nature and able to be thought of. Here we see a major difference between the Dionysian corpus and Ioannes' system. While for P⁹ Dionysius the good cannot be grasped in human terms (and at the state of the fall), and evil can, for Ioannes

¹⁷ *De Div. Nom.* 1, 27-8.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Book 1: Hyman and Walsh, *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁹ See for a detailed discussion of Ioannes' distinctions A. Kijewski, *Die fünf "Non-Being" in Eriugena und Chrysostomus*, "Philotheca" 2 (2002), pp. 35-67, esp. pp. 56-62. See also for the background on Ioannes' distinctions M. I. Colish, *Carolingian Debates over "Nihil" and "Tenebrae": A Study in Twelfth-Century Thought*, "Speculum" 59/4 (1984), D. Beierwalter, *Das Problem des nihilismus (Abstraktionismus) beim Johannes Scotus Erigena*, in: W. Beierwalter, ed., *Philosophie an der Schwelle der Neuzeit*, Darmstadt 1969, and G. Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scotus Eriugena: A Study of Twelfth-Century Thought*, Cambridge 1989.

²⁰ See *Ibid.*, Book 1: Hyman and Walsh, *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8; Kijewski, *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²¹ See A. Kijewski, *The Eriugenian Concept of Theology: John the Evangelist as the Master Theologian*, in: G. Van Riel, C. Steel, J. Balthus, eds., *Johannes Scotus Erigena: The Bible and Hermeneutics*, Leuven 2016, pp. 173-193, esp. p. 179.

²² For the distinction between *per privationem* and *per excellentiam* see among others Beierwalter, *op. cit.*, and Kijewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9.

both can.²⁴ This intellectualist and idealist view of ethics in Loannes' system²⁵ clearly places ethics after—in both temporal and causal terms—metaphysics.²⁶ Loannes first does metaphysics and then ethics. Now, if both good and evil are parts of Nature, the problem is why we should choose the one and not the other. The most possible (and most plausible for Loannes' system) suggestion (much favored, by Kantian deontologists among others) is that it is the rational thing to do. But the problems do not stop here for Loannes. The reason is that if we accept such an alternative, then Loannes sees the realm of Ethics as something quite rational and unexceptionable, if not totally predictable, denying thus from ethics its most important drive: freedom of will. This last issue however, needs further elaboration.

If we consider in more detail the intellectualist continuity in his system between the created and the uncreated²⁷ a clear problem for the freedom of choice or will arises. If we act according to the prototypes put in us by God and do always good, then obviously enough we do not have freedom of choice or a very limited one indeed (since acting outside the commands of the prototypes would make us irrational and evil, but plainly insane or irrational). And this problem shows that the existence of evil as a privation in Loannes' system is quite problematic. Since, if we act according to what can be grasped, i.e. Nature, and do evil, then how and why is evil a privation? It surely can not be a privation of reason, since both good and evil are reasonable and rational. In the possible suggestion that acting according to our prototypes will make sure that we shall not do evil (which notice that also lies in Nature), one may respond that acting in accordance to our prototypes does not make us good, only rational. Goodness, morality and ethics are not concerned only with our rationality. Logic cannot make us good, and this is not shown only by the existence of a not insignificant number of quite sensible logicians (and others

²⁴ To the possible reply here that there could be a difference between the negative (apophatic) and affirmative (kataphatic) mode of thought in Loannes' system in the following lines: the Good is expressed with the negative (or apophatic) and the Evil is expressed with the affirmative (or kataphatic) and thus we have thus an escape from the interpretation of the confusion between the created and the uncreated, my counter-reply would be that in Fr. Dorotheus the apophatic philosophy and theology does not and cannot relate to Nature (in Loannes' use of the word) in the way Loannes' system relates evil and good to Nature.

²⁵ See Kijewski, op. cit., p. 62, 67; I. P. Sheldene-Williams, op. cit., pp. 501-3; Idem, op. cit.

²⁶ See Loannes' *Scripta Floriana*, De Div. Nat. II 4^o 14 X 4 (42^o A B): [...] *Et cum physica autem natura operetur intellectualis autem natura non operetur nisi per regulam regulam operis disciplinam. Per* an analysis of this important passage see Kijewski *The Evangelical Concept*, p. 79.

²⁷ Among others see also Kijewski, *ibid.*; I. P. Sheldene-Williams, *ibid.*; Moran, *ibid.*

who are famous for their power of intellect, but infamous due to their moral character and conduct), but with the problem of *Akasia* or weakness of will, which is studied by moral philosophers from the ancient times and illustrates the same problem quite elegantly.²⁷ Actually we should keep in mind that all and any rational endeavor to know God can not guarantee our approaching Him and our being and doing good. This is quite evident in the fall of Adam, and in the fall of Lucifer and the angels that followed him: even though they knew God, they acted against His will, and that is why they are evil.²⁸

By following here the Platonic and Neoplatonic project of uniting creation and the principle (or cause) of creation Ioannes theory produces the unaccountability of evil, since if it is not totally and absolutely depended upon the human will (which of course has some cognitive elements but it is not reducible to rationality), then its occurrence is without a cause. This opens up his theory for an interpretation that can be a version of mystical nominalism²⁹, agnosticism or even relativism, when it comes to the ontology of evil (i.e., evil loses a concrete substance and essence and becomes a generic concept which lacks concrete reality and thus stable reference).

IV. St. Gregorios Palamas: The Importance of Uncreated Energies

In the above account, we saw that Ioannes Scotus Eriugena, trying to solve the problem of a unitary metaphysics, left himself open to criticism in his ethics for both the unaccountability of evil and for the lack in human freedom of will. Thus, the desideratum of finding a theology and philosophy, which can account for both the free communication and union of man to God and the problem of evil, still remains.

Such a solution is proposed by the system of the great late Byzantine theologian and philosopher, St. Gregorios Palamas. St. Gregorios, trying to de-

²⁷ See my paper on the issue in C. Athanasiopoulos, *Aristotle's Akasia and J. P. Sartre's Bad Faith* in: D. N. Koussis, ed., *The Aristotelian Ethics and its Influence*, Society for Aristotelian Studies, "The Lyceum" Athens 1996, pp. 24-32. Of course Kantians may have a disagreement here, but it is not within the scope of this paper to prove them wrong.

²⁸ See cf. *Genesis* 2: 15-17, *Matthew* 23: 29, *Luke* 4: 12.

²⁹ There are many examples of such mystical nominalism. In Byzantine philosophy one can find good examples in the mystical neoplatonic philosophy of Ioannes Italos and Eustratios, see on this A. C. Lloyd, *The Ascent of Mysticism*, Oxford 1990, pp. 74-5.

and effectively the hysechanic practices of the monks of Holy Mountain in Chalkidiki (Northern Greece) against the rationalistic, agnostic and relativistic attacks made by the educated in the West monk Vassian from Kalavria, wrote a series of treatises, and delivered to his flock in the city of Thessalonika, as the Archbishop of Thessalonika, important Homilies, which together with his many letters to his opponents and friends form a constant corpus, within which we can see a detailed elaboration on the theory of the "Divine Energies". These energies, while uncreated, are everywhere existent and are communicable to man.

In one of his Homilies, discussing God's energies and interpreting fundamental mystical passages from the Dionysian corpus³⁰, St. John the Damascene³¹ and the Holy Bible, Parnas gives the example of the Light of Holy Transfiguration in Mount Thabor. This light was and is divine and uncreated (since it was radically ontologically and metaphysically different from the normal light seen by the eyes of the flesh), but it was not the same as the essence of God. It is this light that the angels and all the saints see and experience and it is this light that all will see and experience in the second coming of Jesus and the Day of judgement. God's essence and substance was, is and will always be unapproachable and unknowable to man and all creation, preserving the radical ontological and metaphysical dichotomy between the created and the uncreated.³² In the example of the light of Transfiguration we can see quite clearly the theory of Divine Energies provided by St. Gregorios Palamas. In such a theory, it is man's free choice to both accept them and try to unite with his God through them, or deny them and distance himself from God, bringing thus the occurrence of evil into the world. To comprehend the Palamite positions more easily see the following passage (s):

Passage IX

St. Gregorios Palamas, Ομιλία 33, Περὶ ἀρετῶν καὶ τῶν ἀντιθέτων ταύταις κακῶν καὶ ἐν κόσμῳ, ὃν κοσμοκράτης ὁ δαίμων ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς ὑποκόμιματι οὐ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀλλ' ὅτι διὰ τῆς παραγωγῆς τῶν ὑποκόμιτων ἐκτεταγμένος αὐτῷ (Homily 33, On the virtues and the opposite to these persons and that the world of which the ruler is the devil, is not God's creation, but (the devil has power over) the ones

³⁰ See Letter, PL 3, 1073 A.

³¹ Homily on the Transfiguration 2 PG 96, 545B.

³² St. Gregorios Parnas, Ομιλία 35, Εἰς τὴν Μεταμόρφωσιν Δουτῆρα (Homily 35, On the Transfiguration second), p. 28-9.

who neither themselves to him through the will nor of God's (παρ' αὐτοῦ), par. 4, 7, and 8.³³

Par. 4: ...Ἡ μὲν οὖν πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἀγάπη, εὐξία καὶ ἀρχὴ πείτης ἀρετῆς ἐστίν, ἡ δὲ πρὸς τὸν κόσμον ἀγάπη πείτης κακίας πρόξενος.

The love of God is the source and beginning of all virtue, and the love for the world is the cause of all evil.

Par. 7: ...Πάν γὰρ εἶδος ἀρετῆς ἐν ἡμῖν ενεργουμένου τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡμῖν προσήλυσται. Τοῦ Θεοῦ δὲ μὴ ενεργούντος ἐν ἡμῖν, ἀμαρτάνεται τὸ πνεῦμα ἡμῶν γινόμενον. Διὸ καὶ ὁ Κυρίως ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ φησὶν, ὅτι· σὺ χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποτεῖν οὐδέν.³⁴

All the kinds of virtues are enacted within us by God's energies. When, however, God is not acting through us (and in us), all that we do is sin. Thus is why the Lord says in the Gospel: 'without me you cannot do anything'

Par. 8: ...Οὕτω μὲν οὖν διὰ τῆς πνευματικῆς διδασκαλικῆς τ. τῶν μελλόντων στήνωσης ἡμῖν ἐγγίνεται, καὶ διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὴν αἰώνιον εὐδαιμονίαν φυχὴν κληθῆναι ἀγάπης ὁ φόβος καὶ ὁ πόθος ταύτων τοῖς πιστοῖς ἡμῖν προσήλυσται καὶ δι' αὐτῶν ἡ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν ἐκτενὴς καὶ συνεχὴς προσευχὴ, καὶ θέλησις, καὶ διὰ τῆς συνεχούς προσευχῆς ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀγάπη καὶ συνάρεσις, καὶ διὰ τῆς συναρέσεως ταύτης πᾶσα ἀρετὴ γινώσκειται συναπλεγμένη τῇν κατελθόντων, τῇ στήνωσι τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐκτενέως τοῖς ἀρετῶν.

In this way, through spiritual teaching, the certain knowledge of the things to be is borne and through the true love of each one to his own soul, there is in us -the faithful- the fear and the strong desire for them [is borne] and through these the extensive and continuous prayer and supplication to God [is borne], and through the continuous prayer the love to Him and the likeness [is borne], and through this likeness every virtue [is borne], which means humility, through the certain knowledge of the One who causes the virtues within us

From the above passages we can see quite clearly four main elements in the ethics put forward by St Gregory Palamas: a, 'To achieve and know the

³³ Found in Παντοκράτορος Χριστοῦ, ἐκ-μετα-μύη-ση. Ἐργαρίου τοῦ Γαλατῆ. Ἀποστολὴ πρὸς τὸν Κορινθίον (ΚΑ+ΜΒ), Παντοκράτορος Εὐδόσιος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ὁ Παλαιός, (ΕΠΕ), Θεσσαλονίκη 1983, pp. 336-339.

³⁴ John 5: 18.

good one must first *live* and pray continuously to God so that he can be *His* God (remember here the mystical systems of union towards God according to the Dionysian corpus); b) The source of all evil is the love for the world and the worldly things (which includes love for the mode of thinking which can only accommodate worldly knowledge); c) if we think we can have a knowledge of the good on our own efforts alone and that we can be or act good on our own powers only, we are wrong; only if we let God (with His divine energies) act through and in us then we can know and do good (in this or any other world, in the absolute or the relative sense of the good); and d) the beginning and the end of the whole process is love (true love for one's self in the beginning, and love for God in the end), which means that the whole process is permeated by freedom (even the fear and strong desire, which exists and plays a minor role in the process, is due to love and the free acceptance of spiritual techniques and guidance)

It is this emphasis on the mystical union and likeness to God and the absolute freedom in man and God which makes the Plotinian account of good and evil less problematic than the one offered by Iamblicus Scythopolitana. Evil in Plotinus is a true privation: a privation of the divine energies that permeate all of creation. That is why according to Plotinus, the devil has power in the world of the senses: Creation, as it was made by God, is full by the uncreated and communicable light and the divine energies of God; it is through the mismanagement and evil appropriation of creation by man, who freely decides not to accept the divine energies and not to let God act through him, that all of man's powers and all of his possessions and emotions and all of the beings which are under his control, are delivered to the devil, supporting his hold and power over the senses (and the sinful, now world of the senses, since it is under their control).²¹ This account of evil is both consistent with the mystical and ecstatic tradition of the Neoplatonic corpus (and the Platonic and Neoplatonic view of

[illegible]

creation as good)¹⁴, but also preserves the absolute freedom of both man (since man can either accept or deny the divine energies) and God (since it is God who decides to whom, for how long, and how many Divine Energies He will give)¹⁵.

V. Goodness as Transcendence of Metaphysics: The Ramifications of the Theory

It is important in this section of my paper to offer some of the most important ramifications for the theory I propose here. The discussion here can be divided into two major parts: a) Ramifications for the interpretation of the Medieval and Byzantine epochs, b) Ramifications for the contemporary Ethical Theory.

a. Ramifications for the Interpretation of the medieval and Byzantine epochs

The theory proposed here has important consequences and opens up further lines of research in the way we see some of the major figures in medieval and Byzantine philosophy (for example the figures of Ioannes Scotus Eriugena, Anselm, Grottestate, Bonaventura, Thomas Aquinas, Ockham, John Duns Scotus and many others).¹⁶ Examples of the questions for which this theory may provide useful answers are:

¹⁴ See above. Of course here we should not forget that St. Gregory Palamas has also a significant amount of Aristotelian metaphysics and ethics on loan; one has only to think about the systematic use of the distinction between what is and what can be in relation to the Palamite metaphysics and ethics, to understand that to make Palamas an ardent supporter of Plato is the most wrong interpretation possible. Let us not forget also that his philosophy Professor at the University of Constantinople was the famous for the time Aristotelian late Byzantine philosopher Theodoros Metochites, and that in his student days St. Gregory Palamas improved frequently the Court of the Byzantine Empire with his public disputations and interpretations of difficult passages in the Aristotelian corpus.

¹⁵ See above St. Gregory Palamas, *Hymns* 40, *ibid.*

¹⁶ See some of my previous work on such investigations: *Anti-Thomism in Byzantine Philosophy: Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, and Moral Ontology in the Theological Opposition to Thomas and Scholasticism* (in English), in: *Philosophy and Orthodoxy*, ed. by K. Boudouris, International Center for Greek Philosophy and Culture, Athens 1994, pp. 41-93. *Knowledge, Faith and Method: The Opposition of St. Gregory Palamas to the Agnosticism and the Rationalism of Later Byzantine Philosophy*, (in Greek) in K. Boudouris, ed., *Greek Epistemology*, Athens: Iona Publications 2001, pp. 1-26. *Sebeosian and Byzantine Basilian Aristotelism in the Metaphysics and Ethics of Agapetus, Duns Scotus, Ockham and the critique of St. Gregory Palamas*, (in English), in "Verbum" (the official journal of

What do we mean by mysticism in medieval/Byzantine Philosophy?

j) Can there be a distinction between philosophical and theological mysticism that are realist from those that can be nominalist, agnosticist or even relativist? In what sense a nominalist, agnosticist or a relativist can be a mystic? Is there a contradiction of terms to believe that one can be both a mystic and a nominalist, agnosticist, or even relativist, when it comes to metaphysics and Ethics?

ii) Could there be for a mystical realist (i.e., one who believes in and discusses analytically and philosophically the mystical reality of God) a radical ontological and metaphysical division between the created and the uncreated with no possibility for a direct communication and salvation while in corporeal life (for the created)? Can this radical division still exist if one proposes a way for the two realms to communicate or does it change all the metaphysical and ethical apparatus?

iii) What is the role (and purpose) of a metaphysics of Nature in a mystical and realist ethics? Is the pre-occupation with a rational comprehension of Nature compatible with mystical realism or with mystical nominalism, agnosticism or relativism?

iv) What further changes in our comprehension of metaphysics and ethics are needed in order to accommodate a (mystical and realist) metaphysics and ethics based on the theory of the Divine Energies?

An important step in comprehending some of the ramifications of the metaphysical and ethical acceptance of the theory of Divine Energies for the proper interpretation of important figures in medieval and Byzantine philosophy is provided in the important work of Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*.²² There Lossky makes the important distinction between contemplation and abstraction, when referring to the mystical way of "raising the mind to those realities which pass all understanding".²³ Contemplation of the anonymity of the dogma of the Holy Trinity for Lossky means to reach through mystical communion and divine energy the level of deification. And this according to Lossky is the proper interpretation of the first few lines of the *On*

the Institute of Medieval Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of St. Petersburg, Russia), Vol. 6, *Voloshe Topics Addressed in Medieval Metaphysics*, January 2002, pp. 54-165.

²² Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (original title *Éclaircissement de l'Église d'Orient*), trans. by the Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1957.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

Mystical Theology in the Dionysian corpus.⁴¹ We can see in Lossky's interpretation the careful avoidance of both agnosticism and skepticism and a way to the proper understanding of the mystical way of realism.

It is also important to note that this framework of discussion of the ethics and metaphysics of major philosophical and theological figures in the medieval and Byzantine epoch differs significantly from some contemporary exegetical approaches.⁴²

b) Ramifications for the contemporary ethical theory.

This application of the theory of the Divine Energies has important ramifications for many problems in contemporary ethical theory⁴³. However, the most important is its use in the defense of moral realism against ethical relativism and skepticism.

There is a line of many contemporary ethical theorists such as Geach, Hare, McDowell and McNaughton, and Murdoch (among many others) that have in one way or another emphasized that ethics cannot survive the deleterious effects of skepticism and relativism if it does not have its foundations in realism.⁴⁴ R. T. Geach in his influential "Good and Evil" examined what can be said about the use of the terms "Good" and "Evil", and discussing the relativistic attack on the realism of the use of these terms concludes that these terms do have a realist use in the logic implied.⁴⁵ R. M. Hare in his also influential work *Freedom and Reason* stresses that the only way to respond to moral skeptics, nihilists and relativists is to base one's ethical theory on two main principles: prescriptivity and universalizability; with these principles in mind one can build a plausible defense to his moral realism.⁴⁶ McDowell and McNaughton stress the fact that moral realism can rationally defend itself through the rationally approachable

⁴¹ See Lossky, op. cit., and the cited Passage V above.

⁴² See for example the contrary to mystical realist views of Alston and Kretzmann; see Alston's views in William Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press 1991, and *Aquinas on Theological Predication: A Look Backward and a Look Forward*, in Eleonore Stump, ed., *Reasoned Faith*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press 1993, pp. 145-78. See also Kretzmann's views in: N. Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas? Natural Theology in Thomas Contra Gentiles I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997.

⁴³ See my cited works of 1994 and 2002, and also *Nature as told in St. Gregory Palamas* (in Greek), in: K. Boudouris, ed., *Ecology and Philosophy* (in Greek), Ionian Publications, Athens 1999, pp. 19-25.

⁴⁴ For my view on the issue see *Good and Evil in Human Nature*, (in English) „Philosophical Inquiry: International Quarterly”, Vol. 22, Summer, 2000, No. 3, pp. 104-15.

⁴⁵ See R. T. Geach, *Good and Evil*, in: Ph. Foot, ed., *Themes of Ethics*, Oxford 1967, pp. 83-100.

⁴⁶ See R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, Oxford 1963.

Mystical Theology in the Dionysian corpus.⁴¹ We can see in Lossky's interpretation the careful avoidance of both agnosticism and skepticism and a way to the proper understanding of the mystical way of realism.

It is also important to note that this framework of discussion of the ethics and metaphysics of major philosophical and theological figures in the medieval and Byzantine epoch differs significantly from some contemporary exegetical approaches.⁴²

b) Ramifications for the contemporary ethical theory.

This application of the theory of the Divine Energies has important ramifications for many problems in contemporary ethical theory⁴³. However, the most important is its use in the defense of moral realism against ethical relativism and skepticism.

There is a line of many contemporary ethical theorists such as Geach, Hare, McDowell and McNaughton, and Murdoch (among many others) that have in one way or another emphasized that ethics cannot survive the deleterious effects of skepticism and relativism if it does not have its foundations in realism.⁴⁴ R. T. Geach in his influential "Good and Evil" examined what can be said about the use of the terms "Good" and "Evil", and discussing the relativistic attack on the realism of the use of these terms concludes that these terms do have a realist use in the logic implied.⁴⁵ R. M. Hare in his also influential work *Freedom and Reason* stresses that the only way to respond to moral skeptics, nihilists and relativists is to base one's ethical theory on two main principles: prescriptivity and universalizability; with these principles in mind one can build a plausible defense to his moral realism.⁴⁶ McDowell and McNaughton stress the fact that moral realism can rationally defend itself through the rationally approachable

⁴¹ See Lossky, op. cit., and the cited Passage V above.

⁴² See for example the contrary to mystical realist views of Alston and Kretzmann; see Alston's views in William Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press 1991, and *Aquinas on Theological Predication: A Look Backward and a Look Forward*, in Eleonore Stump, ed., *Reasoned Faith*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell U. Press 1993, pp. 145-78. See also Kretzmann's views in: N. Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas? Natural Theology in Thomas Contra Gentiles I*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1997.

⁴³ See my cited works of 1994 and 2002, and also *Nature as told in St. Gregory Palamas* (in Greek), in: K. Boudouris, ed., *Ecology and Philosophy* (in Greek), Ionian Publications, Athens 1999, pp. 19-25.

⁴⁴ For my view on the issue see *Good and Evil in Human Nature*, (in English) „Philosophical Inquiry: International Quarterly”, Vol. 22, Summer, 2000, No. 3, pp. 104-15.

⁴⁵ See R. T. Geach, *Good and Evil*, in: Ph. Foot, ed., *Themes of Ethics*, Oxford 1967, pp. 83-100.

⁴⁶ See R. M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason*, Oxford 1963.

moral principles and the quality of moral sensitivity.³⁷ Iris Murdoch on the other hand also believes in the metaphysical reality of the terms "Good" and "Evil" and believes in her famous work with the title *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, that metaphysics is and should be a guide in one's ethics: the metaphysics of the creative force in our daily experiences of the good, the beautiful and God sets up a picture of the world, which is the guide in the "intermediate" world between the "Good" and the "Evil" in which we live.³⁸ In all these approaches we see the influence of two major sources: a) Thomas Aquinas, who in his *Summa Theologiae*, puts under discussion the question of what is more important Being or Good, and responds that in meaning being is prior to good³⁹, and b) Immanuel Kant, who most clearly in his important *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, bases his ethical system on the formal principle of the categorical imperative⁴⁰. Both of them provide adequate material for the support of the intellectualist view of ethics that we see in the above realists.

However, we saw that this intellectualist view of ethics is not without problems and also that the mystical realist view of ethics (in the form of the theory of Divine Energies) can provide a solution to our contemporary ethical impasse. But we also see another aspect of our discussion that deserves our attention. It has been argued (most notably by Brian O'Rourke)⁴¹ that Aquinas was influenced in the articulation of his position by the Dionysian corpus. However, as I have shown quite adequately, he was more influenced by the interpretation that Ioranner Scotus Eriugena provided on important texts of the Dionysian corpus and not by the Dionysian texts themselves. The spirit of these texts is retained in a quite successful way in the writings of St. Gregory Palamas. It is this spirit which can provide the bedrock for a new form of realism in ethics. This ethics will be inspired by the mystical realism of the theory for the Divine Energies, in which—in true Platonic and Neoplatonist fashion—the good is always prior to being, and goodness is a transcendence of metaphysics.

³⁷ See D. McNaughton, *Moral Virtue: An Introduction to Ethics*, Oxford: Blackwell 1998; J. McDowell, *Virtual Virtue and Reality*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 1998.

³⁸ See I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin 1992.

³⁹ See THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 5, 2.

⁴⁰ See the work in English as it is translated by H. J. Paton in I. Kant, *The Moral Law*, trans. H. J. Paton, London: Hutchinson 1972.

⁴¹ See F. O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, Leiden: E. J. Brill 1992.

